

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph on page 5, line 24, to page 6, line 3, with the following paragraph:

In accordance with a further feature of the invention, the gripper, in the closed position thereof, is ~~positionable~~ positioned locally in a fixed position with respect to the gripper pad by the first drive. The gripper pad is movable relative to the gripper by the second drive for clamping the sheets with the gripper closed.

Please replace the paragraph on page 27, lines 8-15, with the following paragraph:

The position of the gripper pad 12 and, therewith, the clamping force applied to the sheet 24, is varied in the preferred embodiment of the invention by an electronic control device 26. The electronic control device 26, via appropriately constructed power electronics 28, applies a voltage corresponding to the respective position of the clamping face of the gripper pad 12 to the piezo-stack of the ~~first~~ second drive 14.

Please replace the paragraph on page 29, line 10, to page 30, line 6, with the following paragraph:

According to the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Fig. 5, the first drive is formed by a piezo-stack or other electric linear drive 42 which, as a result of the application of an appropriate voltage by the control device 26, is movable in a direction parallel to the clamping face 16 of the gripper pad 12, in this case likewise constructed so as to be vertically adjustable. In the opened position, in this embodiment of the invention, the gripper 6 is preferably moved towards the lefthand side in Fig. 5 by the ~~second drive 14~~ first drive 42 to such an extent that the tip of the gripper 6 close to the sheet is located at a spaced distance from the clamping face 16 of the gripper pad 12. In this position, the clamping face 16 of the gripper pad 12 is preferably positioned, by the second drive 14, as far removed as possible from the appertaining clamping face 18 of the gripper 6, so that the sheet 24 can enter freely into the region formed between the clamping faces 16 and 18, without coming into contact therewith. Only then is the gripper moved to the righthand side in Fig. 5 by the first drive 42 until the clamping face 18 of the gripper 6 is positioned above the clamping face 16 of the gripper pad 12. The gripper pad 12 is then moved by the second drive against the appertaining clamping face 18 of the gripper 6 in order to clamp the sheet 24.